

Chevy Chase Village Public Safety Committee

Minutes of Meeting

January 24, 2012

The Public Safety Committee met on January 24, 2012 at 7:30 pm at the Village Hall. Committee members in attendance were Ollie Davidson, Kay Efron, John Talbott, Irwin Pernick, Lisa Sanders, and Saul Goodman. Also in attendance were Chief John Fitzgerald and Larry Heilman (Board Liaison).

The minutes of the meeting of November 11, 2011 were approved. A copy of those minutes are attached.

Chief Fitzgerald reviewed the public safety component of the proposed FY13 capital budget. Highlights included: (1) \$26,000 for police radios, (2) \$8,400 for replacement laptops to be used by the officers in their vehicles, and (3) \$75,000 for crime fighting technology. Chief Fitzgerald is studying options for making sound investments for the Village in crime fighting technology. Chief Fitzgerald also noted that the budget called for a reduction of one police car from prior levels (i.e., a total of four police cars rather than five). Chief Fitzgerald said that he was amenable to trying to manage with one fewer police vehicle on a trial basis.

Chief Fitzgerald reviewed the public safety component of the proposed FY13 operating budget. It includes, among other things, a continuation of (1) current staffing levels and (2) membership in CALEA.

The Public Safety Committee, by unanimous vote, concurred in the proposed FY13 capital budget and FY13 operating budget as outlined by Chief Fitzgerald at the meeting.

The Public Safety Committee, by unanimous vote, recommended that (1) the Village Police participate in the next CALEA accreditation cycle and (2) if the Board of Managers or Budget Committee has a different view, the issue should be addressed as a separate agenda at a Board meeting with prior written notice to the Village in the Crier. The reasons why the Public Safety Committee recommends continued participation in CALEA are outlined in the report of the Public Safety Committee dated February 26, 2011, a copy of which is attached. At the meeting, Chief Fitzgerald confirmed the conclusion in that report that benefits of CALEA membership to the Village significantly outweigh the relatively modest costs of membership (including not only the membership fee, but also the staff costs associated with the Village's CALEA membership and accreditation).

The Public Safety Committee, by a vote of 5 in favor and one abstention, recommended that (1) targeted efforts should be made to reduce the overall costs of the

Communications Center but that the Communications Center continue to be operated to provide service 24/7 to the Village, and (2) if the Board of Managers or the Budget Committee proposes to eliminate 24/7 service, the issue should be addressed either (1) by polling the Village or (2) at a separate meeting of the Board of Managers with prior notice to the Village in the *Crier*.

Before voting on this motion, the Committee had an extended discussion of the costs and benefits of having the Communications Center continue to provide 24/7 service. Among the concerns expressed by the Committee about eliminating 24/7 service were: (1) there would be a delay in response times for at least some non-emergency calls received by Montgomery County police dispatchers from Village residents during hours when the Village Communications Center is closed (because the Montgomery County dispatchers handle calls from a vast area of Montgomery County and they have established procedures for triaging the priority of non-emergency calls); and (2) there will almost certainly be some important calls for non-emergency service from Village residents to which the Village Communications Center would dispatch the Village Police, but to which the Montgomery County Dispatchers would not dispatch either the Montgomery County Police or the Village Police (because the type of requests do not meet Montgomery County's criteria for dispatching non-emergency calls). In this latter category would be requests for non-emergency service for assistance to elderly members of the community who have a real and immediate need for help (such as, and these were examples cited by Committee members, an elderly person who needs help walking on an icy path or an elderly person who has fallen down in his home but is not injured). Chief Fitzgerald also noted that an advantage of keeping the current 24/7 Communications Center is that the Village can maintain quality control over the service. It would not have that control over the Montgomery County dispatchers. It was the view of the Public Safety Committee that (1) the 24/7 Communications Center adds significantly to the quality of life and peace of mind for Village residents and (2) the benefits of having the 24/7 service outweigh the relatively modest overall potential cost savings of eliminating it. It was also the view of the Public Safety Committee that if the elimination of 24/7 service is to be considered, the entire Village should be given notice and an opportunity to be heard on the issue either (1) by polling Village residents or (2) at a Board meeting as a separate agenda item with advance notice to the Village in the *Crier*.